

Message Text

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ACTION EA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 94

INFO CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 5841

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PFOR, EAID, MASS, MOPS, PINT, CB, US

SUBJECT: PLANS OF LTG SAUKHAM KHOY, ACTING PRESIDENT TO BE

1. ON MARCH 31 I MET WITH PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE SAUKHAM KHOY AT HIS REQUEST. AS DEPT IS AWARE, SAUKHAM KHOY WILL BECOME THE ACTING PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC UPON THE DEPARTURE OF LON NOL APRIL 1.

2. SAUKHAM KHOY INFORMED ME THAT HE PLANNED TO TAKE THE FOLLOWING STEPS SHORTLY AFTER ASSUMING OFFICE:
(A) VISIT TO THE TROOPS IN THE FIELD. IN AN EFFORT TO SHORE UP MORALE, SAUKHAM KHOY, WHO IS A LT. GENERAL IN FANK, PLANS TO VISIT THE TROOPS IN THE PHNOM PENH AREA AND AFTERWARDS THE BATTAMBANG AREA, WHICH IS HIS HOME PROVINCE (HE IS FROM SISOPHON). HE PLANS TO TRAVEL INCONSPICUOUSLY WITHOUT THE "ROYAL SUITE" AND MASSIVE SECURITY FORCE WHICH LON NOL DRAGGED AROUND WITH HIM WHENEVER HE LEFT THE PALACE. SAUKHAM KHOY DOES NOT PLAN TO MOVE INTO CHAMCAR MON PALACE, BUT WILL REMAIN IN HIS SMALL WOODEN HOUSE AND ONLY USE CHAMCAR MON TO RECEIVE DIGNITARIES. HE ALSO IS INTERESTED IN TRYING TO FIND A WAY OF GIVING THE TROOPS A WELL DESERVED PAY INCREASE,
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BUT REALIZES THE PROBLEMS THIS WILL CAUSE WITH THE CIVIL

SERVICE AND THE INFLATIONARY IMPACT RESULTING FROM THE FACT THAT THERE ARE NO RESOURCES IN THE NATIONAL BUDGET.

(B) FIGHTING CORRUPTION. SAUKHAM KHOY PLANS TO RETIRE OR REMOVE SOME OF THE MORE CONSPICUOUSLY CORRUPT OFFICERS AFTER A DECENT INTERVAL HAS ELAPSED FOLLOWING THE MARSHAL'S DEPARTURE.

(C) RECRUITING. HE PLANS TO HAVE A DRIVE TO SCARF UP DESERTERS IN THE CITY OF PHNOM PENH AND TO STRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF GETTING RECRUITS INTO FANK. HE SAID THE SENATE YESTERDAY RATIFIED THE LAW RAISING THE AGE LEVEL OF MALES ELIGIBLE FOR THE DRAFT.

(D) APPEAL TO THE US CONGRESS. TOWARDS THE END OF THE WEEK HE PLANS TO SEND A CABLE TO WASHINGTON APPEALING TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE AND THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE TO GRANT SUPPLEMENTAL MILITARY AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO THE KHMER REPUBLIC. IN THIS CABLE HE WILL STRESS THE DEPARTURE OF THE MARSHAL, WHO LEFT THE POLITICAL SCENE IN PART BECAUSE OF THE SEVERE CRITICISM LEVELLED AGAINST HIM IN THE AMERICAN CONGRESS. HE WILL ALSO SPEAK OF THE DETERMINATION OF THE KHMERS TO RESIST THE ADVERSARY'S EFFORTS TO IMPOSE HIS WILL BY FORCE AND FOR THIS PURPOSE THE KHMERS' NEED FOR ADDITIONAL US FUNDS. THE TIME GAINED, SAUKHAM KHOY WILL SAY, WOULD BE USED BY THE GKR TO EXPLORE EVERY AVENUE TOWARDS A POLITICAL SOLUTION TO THE KHMER CONFLICT.

3. SAUKHAM KHOY STRESSED THAT HIS ENTIRE FAMILY HAS REMAINED IN CAMBODIA. HIS WIFE IS WORKING FULL TIME TO HELP ALLEVIATE THE SUFFERING OF THE REFUGEES. RECENTLY SHE HAD AN OFFER TO GO TO VIENTIANE, BUT SHE REFUSED TO LEAVE PHNOM PENH BECAUSE "WE DO NOT HAVE THE MONEY TO SUPPORT OURSELVES OUTSIDE CAMBODIA AND WE WISH TO HELP OUR COUNTRY IN THIS HOUR OF NEED."

4. COMMENT: SAUKHAM KHOY IS AN HONEST, DETERMINED, MODEST MAN. WHETHER HIS APPEARANCE ON THE POLITICAL SCENE WILL HAVE AN IMPACT REMAINS TO BE SEEN. IT MAY ALL BE TOO LATE, ESPECIALLY IF THE AMERICAN CONGRESS DOES NOT ACT POSITIVELY AND QUICKLY TO
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PROVIDE THE GKR WITH THE NECESSARY FUNDS TO DEFEND ITSELF.
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